

in the new south end EVERY HOUSE COUNTS

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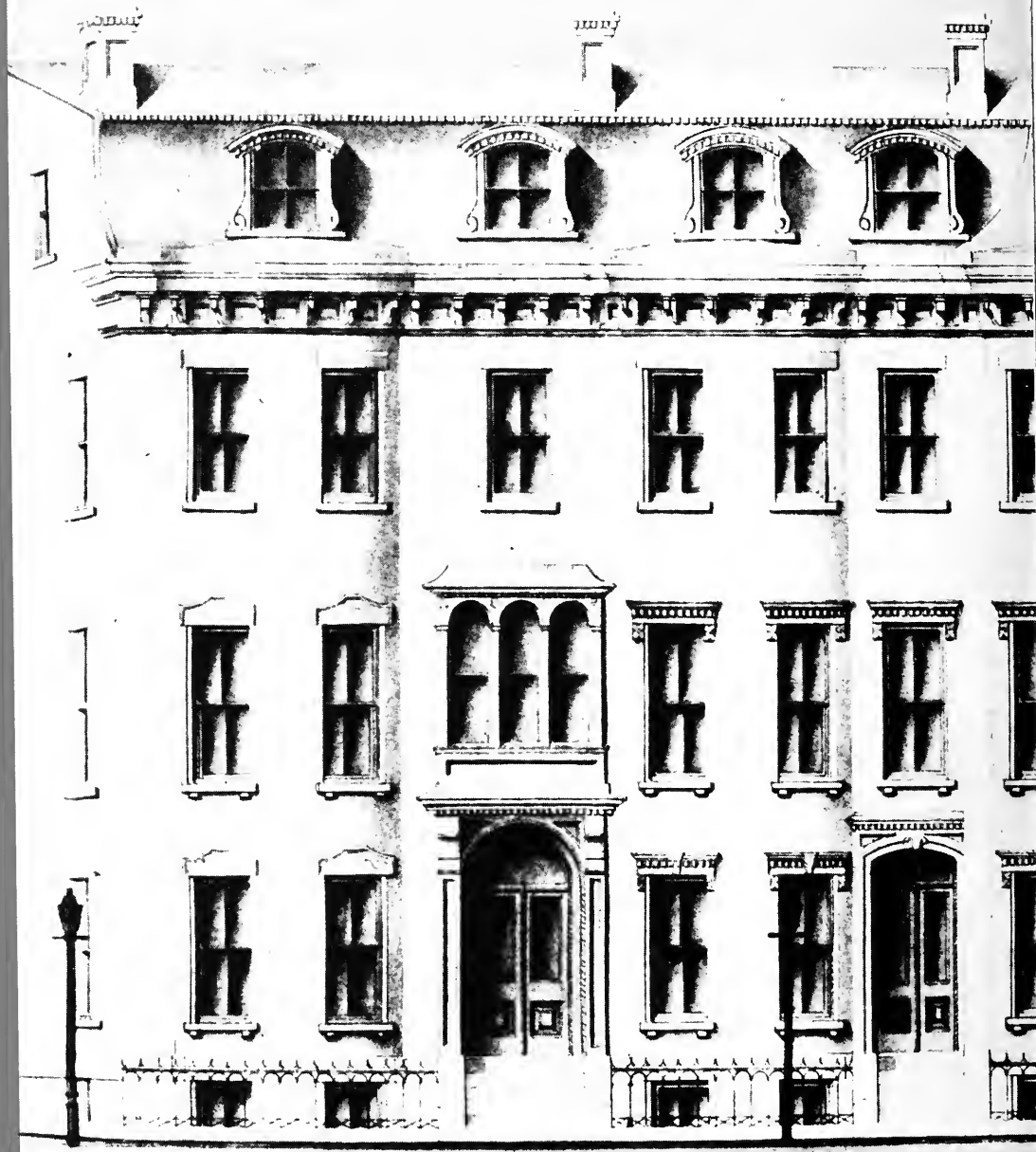
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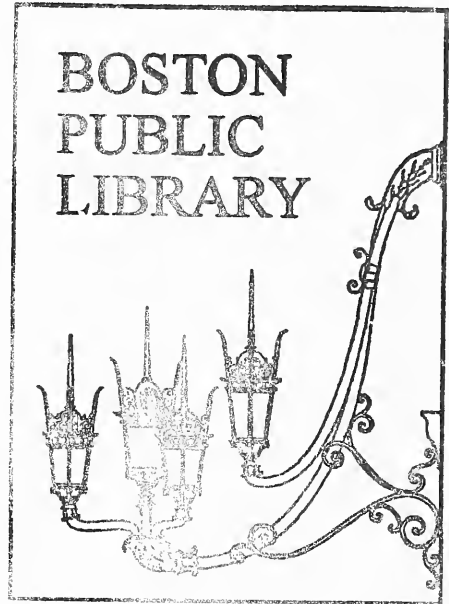
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Notes on Exterior Rehabilitation of South End Houses



GEORGE STEPHEN, chief rehabilitation architect
DAVID WYLIE, South End project lawyer

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, 1967

The preparation of this publication was financed in part through a Federal Loan and Grant from the Renewal Projects Administration of the Department of Housing and Development under the provisions of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended.



In the next few years the South End of Boston will be one of the most active areas of private home improvement in the United States. This pamphlet is to help guide South End homeowners to improve their houses so as to:

save money

protect the value of their property

join the trend toward preserving America's architectural tradition and heritage as found in fine old houses and neighborhoods

make Boston and the South End a better looking, more pleasant place

It is hoped that this pamphlet also will remind South End owner-occupants of the beauty of the South End and encourage them to hold on to their property and enjoy the advantages which neighborhood improvement will bring.

This pamphlet tells about how South End houses look from the outside. Other Boston Redevelopment Authority materials and aids will tell about the equally important improvements to the inside of South End houses and to the outdoor areas, and about how to finance home improvements.

The top photograph on the opposite page shows a "plus" house and the bottom photograph shows a "minus" house. The plus house has everything it ever had; the minus house has been robbed of its simple, clean lines. In addition, siding or sheathing such as shown on the "minus" house is prohibited on brick fronts in the South End by Section 803d of the South End Urban Renewal Plan,

" . . . the unique, unifying, and harmonious predominance of brick facades shall be preserved, and the fronts of structures with such facades shall not be covered with sheathing or siding of any kind or design."

Here are some of the things which make a house plus or minus (please turn next page for definitions of architectural terms):

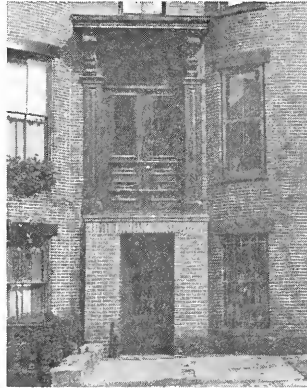
Plus Details

- original brick or brownstone
- original stone steps
- tall windows
- roof cornices and brackets
- lintels, brackets or hood molds over windows
- entrance door unchanged
- old, heavy cast iron railings and fences
- well chosen and cared-for plants, shrubs, window boxes or hedges (*examples below*)



Minus Details

- artificial stone, metal, wood or asbestos siding which covers up the brick or brownstone front
- stone steps ripped out leaving original entrance "in the air" or replacing it with badly-designed doorway (examples A and B below)
- addition of metal or plastic awning, sun-shade or canopy (example B below)
- blocked-up windows (example C below)
- "rustic" or other treatments out of harmony with the surrounding architecture (example D below)
- cornices and brackets or hood molds ripped off
- flush door with small windows or storm door hiding original, outside door
- "modern", thin ironwork or chain link fencing
- poor choice of lighting fixtures
- under-sized, non-working shutters



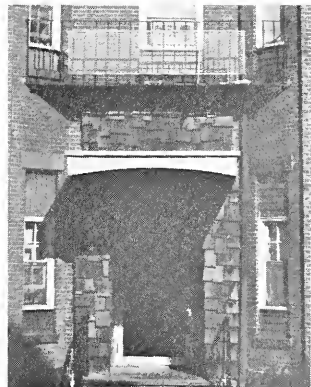
A



B



C



D

1 / Cornice
2 / Brackets
3 / Brick dentils
4 / Lintels
5 / Working shutters

6 / "Two-over-two" windows
7 / Bracketed door canopy
8 / Original panelled doors
9 / Stone steps
10 / Original wrought iron railing



Opposite is a typical South End house with the architectural details labeled. Count yourself lucky if your house has any of these valuable details.

Suggestions for external remodeling:

To repoint the brick on a South End house may cost from five hundred dollars to one thousand dollars, while to reface with artificial stone or stone veneer will cost about twice as much. To replace the original long windows with new ones may cost but one hundred and fifty dollars, while to create shorter windows and fill in the brick work costs closer to two hundred and fifty dollars. These are approximate costs and will vary from one job to another, but the cost of repair, in most cases, is only one-third to one-half as much as that of extensive, "minus" type changes.

Here are some ways to create and keep a plus house:

- When painting choose colors that go well with the brick or other building material. Don't use high-gloss paint / it reflects the light and doesn't give true color value.
- When replacing windows, keep to the "two-over-two" or "one-over-one" double hung window, which is appropriate to the South End style of the architecture. Most people agree that the smaller panes of the Colonial style do not look natural in South End buildings.
- Avoid painting over brickwork. Paint soon flakes off. Money invested in needed re-pointing or in steam cleaning will be well spent and will increase the value of the house.
- When repointing brick walls, do not outline each brick / this makes the house stand out in the block as loud and flashy. Use the existing fine joint or a darker mortar for the best effect.



It will be seen that a house can become "minus" when the original architecture is carelessly changed. Many South End houses were built by master craftsmen at a time when careful, handcrafted workmanship was the rule. The houses would cost unbelievable sums to build today even if the workmen were available. Once the details are stripped off, they are gone forever. What often replaces them is a mixed and uninteresting hodgepodge.

The photographs opposite show how "plus" and "minus" details affect the appearance of a whole block. The top picture is of a row of typical South End houses. Notice the brackets and cornices under the roof, pediments and hoods over doors, generous sized panes in the windows and handsome stone steps with old, heavy wrought iron railings.

The bottom picture shows another typical row, but one house has been refaced in fake stone and looks like a fanciful amusement park structure. The pleasant rhythm of the block is broken.

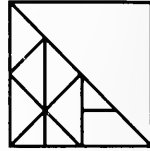


A few years ago the South End was considered a run-down area of no great interest to home buyers. But within the last three years over five hundred houses have been sold in the South End. Usually, where a good sale price was received, the house had a "plus" appearance. It had its original architectural details / or most of them. This interest in South End houses is like money in the bank for every South End property owner because it protects property values. The chances are that the "plus" house will retain its value longer than the "minus" house.

Free expert advice is available on how to tackle housing problems, as well as free cost estimates, free help in preparing plans and interior layouts and free advice on how to get a home improvement loan on the best possible terms. Don't spend money on a South End house before taking advantage of this free assistance.

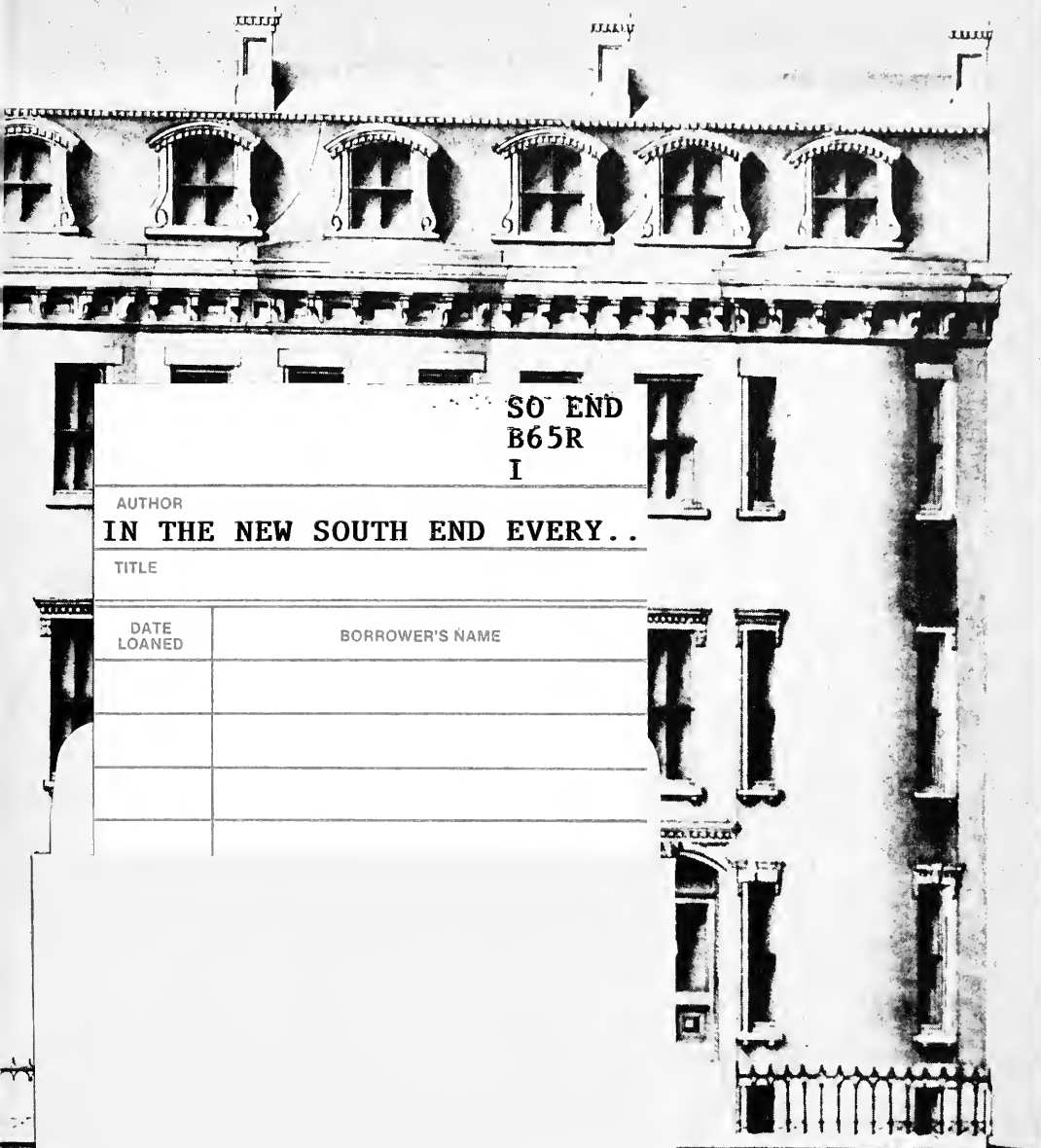
Please visit the Boston Redevelopment Authority office at 72 Warren Avenue, next door to the Mackey School, or call 267-8425 for an appointment.

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TITLE

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Original drawing of
South End dwelling houses
by Nathaniel J. Bradlee,
architect, 1858

